

1 WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

2 1. A method for referring patients to practitioners said method  
3 comprising:  
4 certifying a group of practitioners to perform a medical procedure;  
5 identifying individual patients who wish to receive the procedure; and  
6 providing to the identified individual patients a list of certified practitioners,  
7 wherein those practitioners who have performed more procedures than others of the  
8 practitioners are placed preferentially on the list.

1 2. A method as in claim 1, wherein certifying the practitioners comprises  
2 training practitioners.

1 3. A method as in claim 1 or 2, wherein certifying the practitioners  
2 comprises testing the practitioners.

1 4. A method as in claim 1 or 2, wherein certifying comprises requiring  
2 that the practitioners have performed at least one procedure.

1 5. A method as in claim 1, further comprising removing practitioners  
2 from the certified group.

1 6. A method as in claim 1, wherein the practitioners are placed into tiers  
2 based on the number of procedures performed and wherein practitioners from higher tiers are  
3 preferentially placed on lists.

1 7. A method as in claim 6, wherein the individual practitioners are  
2 randomly ordered within a tier.

1 8. A method as in claim 6 or 7, wherein each tier is defined by a threshold  
2 number of procedures performed over a selected period of time.

1 9. A method as in claims 6 or 7, wherein each tier is defined by the  
2 aggregate number of procedures performed.

1 10. A method as in claim 6, wherein the practitioners are assigned to at  
2 least three tiers.

1 11. A method as in claim 10, wherein the practitioners are assigned to an  
2 initial tier when they become certified, to an intermediate tier when they treat a first threshold  
3 number of patients over a preselected time period, and to a higher tier when they treat a  
4 second threshold number of patients over the preselected time period.

1 12. A method as in claim 1, wherein identifying individual patients  
2 comprises collecting names and contact information from individual patients.

1 13. A method as in claim 12, wherein at least some of the individual  
2 patients contact the coordinator in response to solicitations.

1 14. A method for referring patients to dental practitioners, said method  
2 comprising:  
3 certifying dental practitioners to perform a dental procedure;  
4 informing a potential patient population of the availability of the procedure;  
5 identifying individual patients who wish to receive the procedure;  
6 providing to the identified individual patients referral lists of certified  
7 practitioners wherein individual practitioners are preferentially placed on the referral lists  
8 based on one or more performance criteria.

1 15. A method as in claim 14, wherein the performance criteria include the  
2 number of dental procedures performed over a preselected time period.

1 16. A method as in claim 14 or 15, wherein the performance criteria  
2 include data relating to successful patient outcomes.

1 17. A method as in claim 14, wherein informing comprises soliciting  
2 patients.

1 18. A method as in claim 17, wherein soliciting comprises advertising in  
2 print and/or electronic media.

1 19. A method as in claim 14, wherein certifying the dental practitioners  
2 comprises training the dental practitioners.

1 20. A method as in claim 14 or 19, wherein certifying the dental  
2 practitioners comprises testing the dental practitioners.

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1 21. A method as in claim 14 or 19, wherein certifying comprises requiring  
2 that the dental practitioners have performed at least one procedure.

1 22. A method as in claim 14, further comprising removing dental  
2 practitioners from the certified group.

1 23. A method as in claim 15, wherein the dental practitioners are placed  
2 into tiers based on the number of procedures performed and wherein the tiers are arranged in  
3 order on the list.

1 24. A method as in claim 23, wherein the individual dental practitioners  
2 are randomly ordered within a tier.

1 25. A method as in claim 23, wherein the dental practitioners are assigned  
2 to at least three tiers.

1 26. A method as in claim 23 to 25, wherein each tier is defined by a  
2 threshold number of procedures performed over a selected period of time.

1 27. A method as in claim 23 to 25, wherein each tier is defined by an  
2 aggregate number of procedures performed.

1 28. A method as in claim 25, wherein the dental practitioners are assigned  
2 to an initial tier when they become certified, to an intermediate tier when they treat a first  
3 threshold number of patients over a preselected time period, and to a higher tier when they  
4 treat a second threshold number of patients over the preselected time period.

1 29. A method as in claim 14, wherein identifying individual patients  
2 comprises collecting names and contact information from individual patients who contact a  
3 coordinator.

1 30. A method as in claim 29, wherein at least some of the individual  
2 patients contact a referral center who produces the referral list in response to solicitations  
3 from the coordinator.

1 31. A method for referring patients to practitioners to perform a procedure  
2 said method comprising:

maintaining a referral directory which includes contact information for practitioners, wherein the practitioners are certified to perform the procedure and are prioritized in a plurality of tiers depending on the number of procedures that they have performed;

soliciting and receiving inquiries from prospective patients regarding the procedure; and

referring to individual patients at their requests practitioners within the patient's geographic area, wherein practitioners are selected from the referral directory in a manner which preferentially presents practitioners from tiers which require a higher number of procedures relative to practitioners from tiers which require a lower threshold number of procedures.

32. A method as in claim 31, wherein maintaining the referral directory comprises:

certifying practitioners to perform the procedure; and

tracking the number of times each certified practitioner performs the procedure to produce a performance number for each practitioner;

periodically updating the referral directory to reflect updated performance numbers.

33. A method as in claim 32, wherein the performance number comprises the aggregate number of procedures performed by an individual practitioner.

34. A method as in claim 32, wherein the performance number comprises the number of procedures performed by an individual practitioner over a predetermined time interval.

35. A method as in claim 31, wherein the plurality of tiers is at least three.

36. A method as in claim 31, wherein soliciting comprises advertising and providing contact information that permits a patient to contact a referral center.

37. A method as in claim 36, wherein the referral is a person.

38. A method as in claim 36, wherein the coordinator is an automated response system.

39. A method as in claim 31, wherein referring comprises:  
determining the location of the patient's geographic area; and  
generating from the referral directors a referral list of practitioners within the  
patient's geographic area, wherein the list includes a number of practitioners selected and/or  
arranged so that practitioners from higher tiers are preferentially referred.

40. A method as in claim 39, wherein the higher tiered practitioners are placed on lists in any geographic area more often than lower tiered practitioners.

41. A method as in claim 39, wherein the higher tiered practitioners are placed earlier on a single list than the lower tiered practitioners.

42. A method as in claim 31 wherein referring comprises:  
determining the location of the patient's geographic area; and  
selecting a single practitioner to be referred to the patient, wherein  
practitioners from higher tiers are selected more often than those from lower tiers.

43. A method as in claims 39 or 42, wherein all practitioners are included on at least some referral lists.

44. A method as in claim 31, wherein the referral directory comprises an electronic database, wherein soliciting comprises receiving voice or data inquiries from potential patients at a central location, and wherein referring comprises generating a referral list from the electronic database and responding to the inquiry by providing the referral list to the patient.

45. A method as in claim 44, wherein generating the referral list comprises presenting an ordered list of practitioners on a display screen and responding comprises reading at least some of the names of the practitioners to the potential patients.

46. A method for maintaining a referral directory, said method comprising:  
certifying practitioners to perform a medical procedure;  
tracking the number of times each certified practitioner performs the  
procedure; and  
maintaining a patient referral directory, wherein the practitioners are  
prioritized on the list based on the number of times each has performed the procedure.

47. A method as in claim 46, wherein certifying the practitioners comprises training practitioners.

48. A method as in claim 46 or 47, wherein certifying the practitioners comprises testing the practitioners.

49. A method as in claim 46 or 47, wherein certifying comprises requiring that the practitioners have performed at least one procedure.

50. A method as in claim 46, further comprising removing practitioners from the certified group.

51. A method as in claim 46, wherein tracking comprises determining the number of times a practitioner acquires a kit to perform the procedure on a patient.

52. A method as in claim 46, further comprising dividing the directory based on geographic location.

53. A method as in claim 52, wherein the list is divided into at least two tiers with practitioners who have performed more than a first threshold number of procedures being in a higher tier.

54. A method as in claim 53, wherein the list is divided into at least three tiers with practitioners who have performed more than a first threshold number of procedures being in a higher tier, those who have performed more than a second threshold number but less than the first being in a lower tier, and those who have performed less than the second threshold number being in a still lower tier.

55. A method as in any of claims 47, and 50 to 54, wherein the number of times the procedure is performed is measured periodically over a fixed time interval and the directory periodically updated.

56. A method as in any of claims 47, and 50 to 54, wherein the practitioners are not ordered within a tier.



